



SUCCESS STORY

PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT OFFICE

U. S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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Lackawanna County Firm Presented U.S. Small Business Administration's "District Director's Choice Award"

As part of the U. S. Small Business Administration's 50th anniversary celebration, the agency is acknowledging the outstanding achievements of small businesses. In SBA's Region III, one recipient of the coveted "District Director Choice Award" is Mr. L. Peter Frieder, President and CEO of Gentex Corporation. SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto presented the award to Gentex Corporation in Morgantown, West Virginia, on March 8, 2004 at a special luncheon. The "District Director Choice Award" recognizes the leadership provided by three generations of the Frieder family, which grew the company from its early beginnings as a silk weaving mill to today's largest supplier of air crew and tank crew helmets.

Following a fire in 1894, Klots Throwing Company, located in New York City, moved its silk weaving operation and reopened in Carbondale, Pennsylvania. In 1932, Marcus Frieder, grandfather of the current owner, purchased Klots Throwing Company, renaming the firm General Textile Mills. The name was eventually shortened to Gentex Corporation.

During World War II the company manufactured parachutes for the U.S military. The parachute boxes that Gentex also manufactured were made of a laminated construction to protect the parachutes. This early experience in laminated construction led the way to developing an entirely new product line for its customer. Today, Gentex is a world leader in the design and manufacture of state-of-the-art protective headgear for the U.S. military and law enforcement as well as foreign government services.

The SBA contributed to the success of Gentex. Needing additional capital to expand operations in 1961 and again in 1968, Gentex looked to the SBA to help provide the funding necessary for the continued growth of the firm.

The "District Director's Choice Award" recognizes three main accomplishments: business success measured by sales and profits; demonstrated business leadership; and, significant community service. The Frieder family's vision has provided employment opportunities in northeastern Pennsylvania for the past 70 years. Currently employing 450 people in the region, Gentex continues to be a leader in the development and manufacture of personnel support equipment.

"Gentex is a classic American entrepreneurial success story," said Allegra McCullough, SBA Region III Administrator. "We are pleased to honor the company and the Frieder family with this award."

"The Frieder family epitomizes the spirit of an American Entrepreneur," added SBA Philadelphia District Director Tom Tolan. "Dedication to their customers, employees and community is indicative of Gentex's continued success."

Gentex's vision considers their employees as their source of strength and are committed to their community, continuous improvement and personal satisfaction.